Volume 3: Issue 6 June 13, 2005

West Nile Virus Newsletter

For the third year, the Department of Health (DOH) is using this electronic newsletter as a regular communication tool to help keep its partners informed about West Nile virus (WNV). The newsletter will be provided every two weeks throughout the warmer peaks of the mosquito season and less frequently during the colder, non-peak mosquito periods.

Environmental monitoring for WNV resumes around the state

Washington State Department of Health, News Release, May 31, 2005

OLYMPIA - Last summer West Nile virus made its way into Oregon and Idaho; however, there was no sign of it in Washington. Now that we are starting a new mosquito season, the search for the disease in Washington is on again. Monitoring dead birds and mosquito populations are important ways of identifying the arrival and presence of the virus. The Washington State Department of Health is working with local health departments as this monitoring resumes around the state.

A U.S. Geological Survey pathologist examines a dead crow suspected of being infected with West Nile virus. (Photo: USGS National Wildlife Health Center)

"We will be monitoring intensively for the virus again this season," said Maryanne Guichard, director of the Department of Health's Office of Environmental Health and Safety. "Our monitoring program has started for the 2005 West Nile virus season and we are testing dead birds because they are usually affected by the disease before human cases occur."

The complete press release is available at http://www.doh.wa.gov/Publicat/2005_news/05-064.htm.

Region on lookout for signs of West Nile

By Barry Ginter, The Olympian, June 6, 2005

Thurston County health officials watching for cases of West Nile virus are recommending you steer clear of mosquitoes this summer. And they'd also appreciate a phone call if you find a dead crow, raven or jay.

Washington continues to be one of only three states without a human case of West Nile virus, but health officials say there's a good chance that could change this summer. Birds and horses have

been found in the state with West Nile disease, including a bird found in Thurston County in 2002.

Mosquitoes are present in greatest numbers in South Sound in late summer and early fall, but the hot weather of late is likely to bring out more of the pests, said Darrell Cochran, Thurston County's senior environmental health specialist.

As part of its monitoring efforts, the county collects dead birds, which are sent to a lab in Madison, Wis., for testing.

Last year, dozens of dead birds from Thurston County were tested, but tests showed none was infected. Two birds from the county were sent away to the lab a few weeks ago, and there has been no notification of a West Nile finding, Cochran said.

"They will call us within a week if they're positive," he said.

The complete news article is available at http://theolympian.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050531/NEWS/380.

First confirmed equine case of West Nile virus in California

California Department of Food and Agriculture, News Release, June 1, 2005

SACRAMENTO - The first positive equine case of West Nile Virus (WNV) in California in 2005 has been reported in Plumas County. The horse, which is recovering, is a 3-year-old quarter horse mare. The case was confirmed about a month earlier than the first case of 2004.

The complete news release is available at http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/pa/pressreleases/PressRelease.asp?PRnum=05-019.

Human Exposure to Mosquito-Control Pesticides --- Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia, 2002 and 2003

CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, June 3, 2005 / Vol. 54 / No. 21

Ultra-low volume, truck-mounted spraying for mosquito control – Mississippi, 2002 (Photo: CDC)

Public health officials weigh the risk for mosquito-borne diseases against the risk for human exposure to pesticides sprayed to control mosquitoes. Response to outbreaks of mosquito-borne diseases has focused on vector control through habitat reduction and application of pesticides that kill mosquito larvae. However, in certain situations, public health officials control adult mosquito populations by spraying ultra-low volume (ULV) (<3 fluid ounces per acre [oz/acre]) mosquito-control (MC) pesticides, such as naled, permethrin, and d-phenothrin. These ULV applications generate aerosols of fine droplets of pesticides that stay aloft and kill mosquitoes on contact while minimizing the risk for exposure to persons, wildlife, and the environment. This report summarizes the results of studies in Mississippi, North Carolina,

and Virginia that assessed human exposure to ULV naled, permethrin, and d-phenothrin used in emergency, large-scale MC activities. The findings indicated ULV application in MC activities did not result in substantial pesticide exposure to humans; however, public health interventions should focus on the reduction of home and workplace exposure to pesticides.

The complete report is available at
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5421a1.htm.

West Nile not just a nuisance

By Lauran Neergaard, The Associated Press, May 31, 2005

WASHINGTON – Patricia Heller was superhealthy, an avid skier and competitive bicyclist. So when she collapsed in the street after a daylong bike ride, she first shrugged off the weakness as cramps.

The next morning, Heller's left leg was completely paralyzed. It was West Nile virus, from a mosquito bite the Colorado woman doesn't even remember. She would need months of grueling therapy to walk again and today, almost two years later, still isn't fully recovered.

West Nile was long considered a serious problem only for the elderly and frail, and more of a nuisance illness for everyone else. Now a surprising number of patients such as Heller show the virus is more threatening than widely believed – and research finds that even so-called mild cases of West Nile fever can impair people for weeks or months.

It's sobering news as the nation gears up for a seventh season of the mosquito-borne virus.

"West Nile is fading a little bit from the public consciousness," worries Dr. Henry Masur of the National Institutes of Health. "Still, there are more cases of paralysis (from West Nile) than there were in many years of polio."

West Nile virus had stricken abroad for decades, from the tip of Africa up to Europe and throughout Asia, before it appeared in New York City in 1999. Since then, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have counted more than 16,600 human cases and 654 deaths.

Severe illness still is rare, considering that 80 percent of people infected never show symptoms. But last year, about a third of the cases reported to CDC had neurologic complications like meningitis or encephalitis. Those are most common in older adults.

Then there are patients like the athletic Heller, who came down with West Nile's most perplexing complication: poliolike paralysis or severe muscle weakness that often strikes healthy people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. They might show no other symptoms before a limb suddenly quits working. Sometimes the paralysis leads to respiratory failure.

Even the less serious form of illness, West Nile fever, is turning out to be harder to kick than doctors initially described. A study by Chicago's health department last fall found that West Nile fever was bad enough to keep half of sufferers out of school or work for 10 days, fatigue lasted a month – and the median time to get back to normal was a stunning 60 days.

In much of the world, West Nile is a fairly mild illness. But the form working its way through the U.S. appears similar to a more virulent Israeli strain, something not initially apparent to health workers.

Anyone with symptoms of serious illness should see a doctor right away: high fever, severe headache, confusion or difficulty thinking, stiff neck, severe muscle weakness, or tremors.

This news article can be viewed at
http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/nationworld/story/4910033p-4499345c.html

Survivors of West Nile fighting its spread

By Alicia Chang, The Associated Press, June 2, 2005

LOS ANGELES -- Soon after Jack Raney recovered from the West Nile virus that left him comatose for several days, he began a public information campaign against the disease that stole his job and games of catch with his kids.

As summer ushers in another West Nile season, Raney and a small but growing group of victims have dedicated themselves to grassroots projects that put a public face on the disease and pressure health officials to do more to prevent its spread.

"I'm all for talking about it because it's a lonely disease," said Raney, 47, who had to quit his job as a bricklayer after suffering from depression and memory loss.

Raney has lobbied Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for more funding to fight West Nile and helped public health officials promote a speedy new way to test infected birds, which can transmit the virus to mosquitoes that infect people.

Mitch Coffman, of Lafayette, La., was a black belt in tae kwon do and motorcycle enthusiast when he contracted West Nile in 2002. Coffman can't do either anymore because of the damage the virus did to his body.

Coffman has started a nonprofit called the West Nile Virus Survivors Foundation, which includes a Web site with information about the illness, the latest newspaper clippings and stories about other survivors.

Coffman, 40, was a month shy of finishing graduate school when he fell ill. During his recovery, he realized that not all survivors receive the kind of family support he did.

"I don't want to be anybody's hero," he said. "I just want to let people know that there's a way to survive West Nile."

The complete news article is available at
http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/apscience_story.asp?category=1500&slug=West%20Nile.

Community Comments

We would like to hear your comments on this newsletter and things you would like to see by sending them to Maryanne Guichard, 360.236.3391 or maryanne.guichard@doh.wa.gov.

WNV Web Resources

Washington State Department of Health www.doh.wa.gov/wnv
Center for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/
Cornell University, Environmental Risk Analysis Program environmentalrisk.cornell.edu/WNV/
Washington State University Cooperative Extension wnv.wsu.edu/
Washington State Department of Agriculture
agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/AnimalHealth/Diseases/WestNileVirus/default.htm

Article Submission and Subscribing to Newsletter

We are interested in receiving articles for future publications of the WNV Newsletter. Please submit articles and subscription requests to Ben Hamilton, benjamin.hamilton@doh.wa.gov.

DOH Contact List for West Nile Virus

General Public Toll-Free Information Line 1.866.78VIRUS

Publications: Brochures/Flyers/Response Plan/Fact Sheets
Cyndi Free, 360-236-3384 or cyndi.free@doh.wa.gov

Surveillance: Mosquito
Jo Marie Brauner, 360.236.3064 or jomarie.brauner@doh.wa.gov

Animal Surveillance: Dead bird and horse surveillance, case reporting, and laboratory assistance, as well as general WNV response
Tom Gibbs, 360.236.3060 or tom.gibbs@doh.wa.gov

Aquatic Mosquito Control National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit: Training, technical assistance
Ben Hamilton, 360.236.3364 or benjamin.hamilton@doh.wa.gov

WNV in Humans: Clinical information, case reporting, and laboratory testing
Call your local health jurisdiction or DOH Communicable Disease Epidemiology, (206) 418-5500 or (877) 539-4344.

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